

VZCZCXRO1497  
RR RUEHBC RUEHDE RUEHIHL RUEHKUK  
DE RUEHGB #0381 0441224  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 131224Z FEB 09  
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1700  
INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000381

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: THE AMBASSADOR'S FAREWELL CALL ON FORMER PM ALLAWI

Classified By: Classified by Ambassador Ryan C. Crocker for reasons 1.4  
(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Former PM Ayad Allawi, clearly pleased with the success of his Iraqiyya list in the recent provincial elections, told the Ambassador during a February 12 farewell call that he expected further gains for the party when the final results are released later this month. Allawi also recounted his recent audience with Ayatollah Sistani, claiming the Najaf cleric is dissatisfied with the current political situation. End summary.

¶2. (C) The Ambassador congratulated Allawi on the strong showing his Iraqiyya list in the provincial elections. Allawi, clearly pleased by Iraqiyya's performance, noted that, as provisional results are revised, the list appeared to be making further gains in Diwaynia, Babil, and Salaheddin provinces. "This is an opportunity for us to rectify matters at the national level," he stated.

¶3. (C) We need to draw lessons from the recent elections, Allawi continued. Political party finance is a particular issue requiring attention, he said, and there is a need for a political party law that would regulate the parties and require them to declare their finances. The Ambassador offered his impression that while a lot of money had been handed around in advance of the elections, at the end of the day, people voted as they wished. Allawi did not disagree, but noted that money made a big difference for parties in pursuing media campaigns. Iraqiyya had been disadvantaged in this regard, he asserted.

¶4. (C) Allawi noted that he had just returned from Najaf, where he had had an audience with Ayatollah Sistani. Sistani had complained that Allawi never called on him, he reported. Allawi said that his minimal contacts with Sistani reflected his rejection of intermingling religion with politics. He described Ayatollah Sistani, and particularly his son Mohammed Reda, as angry and dissatisfied by the current political situation (Allawi did not elaborate further on Sistani's dissatisfaction).

¶5. (C) Allawi said he urged Sistani to avoid sectarianism, recalling that Iraqi Shiites had led the revolt against British occupation in the 1920s, but they had done so not as Shiites, but as patriots. He said he had also underlined to Sistani his concerns about Iran: Iran is a neighbor of Iraq and can be a friend, but only when international norms are respected. Sistani did not disagree with this point, Allawi maintained. Allawi said he and his colleagues intended to keep an open channel to Sistani, his circle, and other leading members of Najaf's clerical establishment.

¶6. (C) In an aside, Allawi told the Ambassador he had visited the new Najaf Airport and had met with the principal investor, an Iraqi expatriate, who offered a promising

example for the future of Iraq. The Ambassador emphatically agreed: The Najaf Airport project offered a model of infrastructure development through public-private partnership that should be emulated across Iraq.

¶7. (C) Allawi said he regretted the Ambassador's departure and hoped that the Ambassador would remain engaged with Iraq and the region. "You have earned a lot of good will across the region," he stated. While the Ambassador will be missed, Allawi concluded, "our struggle will continue."

CROCKER